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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 000076

SIPDIS

KABUL FOR USFOR-A COS,
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/15/2014
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [PINR](#) [PTER](#) [KDEM](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: PATH TO A PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR,S POLITICAL REBIRTH

REF: A. REFS: A) KABUL 2641
[1](#)B. B) KABUL 2783
[1](#)C. C) KABUL 3208
[1](#)D. D) KABUL 3294
[1](#)E. E) KABUL 3026
[1](#)F. F) KABUL 2937

Classified By: PRT Director Valerie C. Fowler for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Uruzgan Governor Hamdam narrowly escaped dismissal by President Karzai. As recently as September 2008, the Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) told Hamdam that he had three months to improve his performance or face termination. With strong backing from the IDLG and PRT, Hamdam developed a plan that, among other things resulted in significant progress in tribal reconciliation and greater attention and resources from Kabul. IDLG Director Popal recently underscored to Hamdam President Karzai's satisfaction with his evolution as a leader. Continued support from the IDLG and the PRT to strengthen the institution of the governor's office will help keep Hamdam on the right path as he moves forward with voter registration preparation, reconciliation, poppy eradication, and other initiatives.

Hamdam Redeems Himself, Finally

[1](#)2. (C) After a year on the job and following several stern warnings by the IDLG in September 2008 (refs A and B), Governor of Uruzgan Province Assadullah Hamdam resolved to raise his profile in the province and exert his leadership. Hamdam successfully lobbied IDLG Director Popal to hold the second IDLG Southern Regional Governor's Conference in Uruzgan. Hamdam viewed the November 15 conference as an opportunity to "put Uruzgan on the map," as several key ministers from Kabul and ISAF commanders from RC-South attended the event. International observers praised Hamdam's organization of the conference, his chairing of the sessions, and his thoughtful comments during the discussions.

[1](#)3. (C) Hamdam simultaneously worked closely with the PRT and CF to organize a provincial peace jirga. Since his appointment, Hamdam's top priority has been to establish a formal dialogue between the disenfranchised Ghilzai tribes, the powerful but fragmented Barakzai tribes, and the political elite Popolzai tribes. In April 2008 Hamdam hosted a 500-person preparatory jirga to set the conditions for the larger peace jirga, but for a variety of factors, including a growing rift with his provincial department directors, Hamdam

lost interest in the jirga process. It was not until October, after IDLG tightened the screws on the Governor, that he revived his plans for a peace jirga with tribal elders, religious leaders, and local GIROA officials.

¶4. (C) To ensure maximum participation in the reconciliation process, Hamdam developed a proposal to hold smaller jirgas in remote and unstable districts to address local concerns and oversee the election of delegates to the provincial jirga set for late November. With financial support from the IDLG, the Dutch Embassy and USAID, Hamdam invited 1,000-1,200 provincial jirga participants to Tarin Kowt, where transportation and room and board were provided free of charge. Hamdam set the tone for the jirga by announcing that he had intended for Taliban members to participate in the jirga and a general invitation had been sent to known "moderate" insurgents, but "unfortunately," none accepted his offer.

¶5. (C) Thanks largely to the Governor's display of charisma, negotiating skills, and vision, the jirga unanimously adopted a resolution that underscored the need for immediate inter-tribal cooperation on local security; more direct support for GIROA and stronger opposition to insurgents; elimination of poppy cultivation by 2010; and establishment of a council of 100 tribal elders and religious leaders to facilitate further reconciliation efforts at the district level. The IDLG leadership has since highlighted Hamdam's approach to other governors and in meetings with high-level USG visitors (ref C). According to IDLG deputy director Barna Karimi, hundreds of insurgents have recently signaled

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interest in responding positively to the Governor's initiative.

Now Keep Up the Good Work

¶6. (C) Upon Hamdam's return from his December vacation, Popal asked the Governor to stay in Kabul for several days for a series of one-on-one meetings. Popal also facilitated meetings with the ministries of Education, Interior, and MRRD. The IDLG Director made clear to Hamdam that, despite Hamdam's repeated requests for relocation to a more "high-profile province," the President wanted Hamdam to continue his work in Uruzgan for "at least a few more months." IDLG contacts confirmed that Hamdam is expected to remain in place for at least the next six to seven months and perhaps even through the presidential elections.

Governor's Work Plan

¶7. (C) Following his meetings in Kabul, Hamdam outlined his priorities for the next quarter:

-- Voter Registration. Hamdam admits that this issue was not at the top of his priority list (ref D), but Popal stressed that successful voter registration campaigns in the south of Afghanistan were critical.

-- Tribal reconciliation. Hamdam will charge his newly formed council of elders to begin holding bi-weekly shuras with key tribal elders and district officials in their respective districts, and in close coordination with Hamdam, the elders will engage marginalized tribes and willing Taliban members. The elders will convene in Tarin Kowt with the (defunct) Provincial Council, ANSF commanders, relevant provincial directors, and the Governor every two months to discuss reconciliation efforts and development concerns. In unstable Khas Uruzgan district, 70 elders recently approached the Taliban shadow district governor with a formal request to reconcile with GIROA, and Hamdam has tasked the council of elder's Khas Uruzgan representatives and the province's PTS

director to coordinate the possible talks.

-- Poppy Eradication. Hamdam will use the council of elders to persuade those farmers who planted poppy to eradicate their own poppy fields, or be subject to forced eradication. He admitted that MOI and MOD have not shown much willingness to provide force protection for his hired eradication workers (ref E), but said he intended to use 10 tractors provided for eradication by donors previously to eradicate as many fields as possible this year if he could find the spare parts to make them serviceable (PRT is assisting).

-- Personnel reshuffling. Hamdam is keen on appointing a new deputy governor. Despite current deputy Kodai Rahim,s improved performance over the past two months, his close association with local power broker Jan Mohammad Khan (JMK) remains a serious concern for the embattled Governor. Popal reportedly told Hamdam he was also "fed up" with JMK,s blatant attempts to steer Uruzgan politics through his close relationship with Karzai. Popal agreed to Hamdam,s proposal to have his newly formed council of elders select a new deputy governor and Hamdam will encourage Kodai Rahim to accept the Director of Education position (he is a school teacher by training). Hamdam has also secured Popal,s approval to press MOI for a new provincial chief of police.

-- Integration plan for Gizab district. Popal informed Hamdam that he wanted to finalize the status of Gizab district, which formally is part of Dai Kundi province but partially falls under the administrative responsibility of Uruzgan. The majority Pashtun population in Gizab had pushed the IDLG for the full integration with Uruzgan because they preferred to be under a "Pashtun-led" province. Popal said that he would secure support from ISAF, but Hamdam needed to develop a security, governance, and development plan for the integration.

What Explains Hamdam,s Political Rebirth?

18. (C) Hamdam,s turnaround is essential to giving stability and development in the province a fighting chance, and may serve as an example for other governors. After six months of observing and working closely with the Governor, at least two

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factors contributed to his improved performance:

-- Involving IDLG. The IDLG, in coordination with the U.S. and Dutch Embassies, gave tough but encouraging messages to Hamdam on his lackluster management style and limited engagement with tribes and district officials. Karimi maintained nearly daily contact with Hamdam to address these concerns, and when Hamdam showed a spark of initiative, the IDLG did its part to fan the flames.

-- Empowering the Governor. The PRT developed a range of proposals to strengthen Hamdam,s position in the province, including increasing the number of IDLG advisors in his office and the USAID-funded technical advisors in provincial departments (ref F), establishing an Executive Steering Committee for the moribund Provincial Development Council to ensure all large-scale development projects were funneled through his office, and developing and publicizing a provincial quarterly budget report to improve financial accountability and transparency.

19. (C) Hamdam is clearly hoping to be tapped for a more high-profile governorship or senior Kabul position in the next few months. However, he finally seems to recognize that the path to his promotion most likely lies in hard work and concrete results in a challenging province.

WOOD